

OPTIMIZING GOOGLE DOCS TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL OF DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract

This research aims at identifying how the use of Google Docs can improve students' writing skill of descriptive text; and describing the class climate when Google Docs is implemented in the writing class. The method used in this research is a collaborative action research which was conducted in two cycles at the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 3 Sukoharjo from August 2nd to October 1st 2012, in which in the first cycle there were 3 meetings and in the second cycle there were 2 meetings. Each cycle consisted of four steps: planning, implementing, evaluation, and reflection. The research data were collected by using observation, questionnaire, interviews, field notes, photographs, and tests. The qualitative data were analyzed through assembling the data, coding, comparing, building interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. The quantitative data were analyzed by comparing the mean scores of the pre-test and the post-tests. The research findings show that Google Docs could improve students' writing skill of descriptive text and class climate of English class. The mean score shows the improvement from pretest to the post-test, from 62.39 into 77.04. The improvement of classroom situation includes: 1) students were always ready to have writing class immediately; 2) students developed the idea fluently without talking with other students; 3) students paid full attention to the lesson; 4) it did not take students a long time anymore to write sentence; 5) students made less noisy during the lesson

Keywords: writing, Google Docs, descriptive text, SMP students

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi bagaimana penggunaan Google Docs dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis deskriptif text siswa, dan menggambarkan suasana kelas ketika Google Docs diimplementasikan dalam kelas menulis. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah penelitian tindakan kolaboratif yang dilakukan dalam dua siklus pada siswa kelas VIII SMP Negeri 3 Sukoharjo dari 2 Agustus hingga 1 Oktober, 1 2012, dimana pada siklus I terdapat 3 pertemuan dan pada siklus kedua terdapat 2 pertemuan. Setiap siklus terdiri dari empat langkah: perencanaan, pelaksanaan, evaluasi, dan refleksi. Data penelitian dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan observasi, kuesioner, wawancara, catatan lapangan, foto, dan tes. Data kualitatif dianalisis melalui pengumpulan data, coding, membandingkan, membangun interpretasi, dan pelaporan hasil. Data kuantitatif dianalisis dengan membandingkan nilai rata-

rata dari pre-test sampai post test. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Google Docs dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis deskriptif text siswa dan juga dapat meningkatkan situasi kelas menulis. Nilai rata-rata mengalami peningkatan dari pretest sampai posttest yaitu dari 62.39 sampai 77.04. peningkatan pada situasi kelas meliputi : 1) siswa siap mengikuti kelas menulis dengan tepat waktu; 2) siswa dapat mengembangkan ide dengan lancer tanpa berbicara dengan siswa lain; 3) siswa memberikan perhatian penuh terhadap pelajaran; 4) siswa tidak memerlukan waktu lama lagi untuk menulis kalimat; 5) siswa tidak lagi membuat gaduh dalam kelas menulis

Kata Kunci: menulis, Google Docs, deskriptif text, siswa SMP

Writing skill is one of English skills that should be learned by students beside listening, speaking and reading. In writing, students must be able to write sentences using correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and coherent ideas. By learning writing, students will be able to communicate well not only in spoken language but also in written language. According to the 2006 KTSP for SMP/MTS, the students in the eighth grade are expected to be able to write some text types; descriptive, narrative, and recount. They are expected to be able to differentiate the types among the texts taught. They are also expected to be able to arrange certain texts using their own words or create the new ones.

Bell and Burnaby in Nunan (1998:6) say that writing is an extremely complex cognitive activity in which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously. At the sentence level these include control of content, format, sentence

structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and letter formation. Beyond the sentence, the writer must be able to structure and integrate information into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and texts. In writing, there are numbers of aspects that must be considered to make the information inside the paragraphs and text cohesive and coherent. Enre (1988:13) defines that writing is a process of thinking systematically, so that what is being written can be easily understood.

The students' low writing skill is indicated through the following indicators. Seen from the pre-observation, the indicators of problems in writing skill are: (1) students have difficulties in expressing and developing ideas. Students are able to make topic or idea in their writing, but they do not know how to develop their idea; (2) students get difficulties in cohesiveness and coherence.; (3) students often make mistakes in word choice in writing descriptive text. The limited word choice makes

students find difficulties in applying the appropriate word to express their idea especially to write descriptive text; (4) sometimes students spell some words incorrectly. Sometimes, they know the words they want to use, but they do not know how to spell the words correctly; (5) students often write sentence in wrong structure (grammatical errors); (6) students ignore capitalization and punctuation.

From the classroom climate, the indicators of problems in classroom are: (1) Some of the students spend much time to have writing class; (2) Some of students talk with other students in order to discuss what they will write; (3) some students cannot keep their focus on the lesson. They often talk to their friends before they start writing; (4) students need a long time in writing sentence. They get difficulties in exploring and developing ideas; (5) the writing class is too noisy. Students like to speak each other because they are not able to do writing exercise.

The indicators above are caused by several causes. The causes come from the material and technique, the teacher, and the students. The causes are: (1) Students need more interesting media to support their writing class; (2) Students need interesting material from many sources, it is not only from monotonous text books. Because the monotonous material

gives less challenge to the students to explore their knowledge and capability; (3) teachers need to manage an interesting writing class. He has to make interesting media and teaching technique; (4) students rarely practice writing in their daily activity; (5) the material given needs to be changed by an attractive material.

To solve the problems, it must be developed the ability of writing such as grammar, vocabulary, content, organization, and mechanical, also must find out the suitable media. One of the appropriate media to solve students' writing problem is Google Docs. It is a free, Web-based word processor, spreadsheet, presentation, form, and data storage service offered by Google. It allows users to create and edit documents online while collaborating in real-time with other users.

Based on the background of the study above the researcher formulates the problem statements are: 1) Can Google Docs improve writing skill of eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 3 Sukoharjo in 2012/2013? If yes to what extent is its improvement? ; 2) What happens with the classroom climate when Google Docs is implemented in the writing class?

According to Kennedy, Mighell, & Kennedy in Claire Couillard (2011:1) Google docs is an

application that allows users to create documents, spreadsheets and PowerPoint and share them with other online users. The superiority of Google Docs is that it keeps a record of revised document. While, Daire Ó Broin and Damien Raftery (2011:3) state that Google Docs is part of a wider offering of online applications from Google. It includes an online word-processor, a spreadsheet application, and a presentation application, as well as the very useful ability to easily create simple online forms, the results of which are automatically stored in a Google spreadsheet. According to Bradley in Claire Couillard (2011:2), the most current version of Google Docs allows a user to share a document with up to 200 people, and as many as 50 users can work on it at the same time. Bradley states, "If two users are editing the same document at the same time, a box at the top of the screen will list the current collaborators"

From several definitions above Google docs is an easy-use online word processor, spreadsheet and presentation editor made by Google that enables teacher and students to create, store and share instantly and securely, and collaborate online in real time. By using Google Docs they can create new documents from scratch or upload existing documents, spreadsheets and presentations.

Daire Ó Broin and Damien Raftery (2011) describe the procedure how to use Google Docs in teaching language as follows:

1. Introducing Google Docs to the students
2. Creating Gmail account
3. Creating a document
4. Sharing the document.
5. Viewing revision history

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this research was action research.. This classroom research was conducted in SMP Negeri 3 Sukoharjo that is located at Jl. Dr. Setomo No. 1 Sukoharjo. It is near some public areas, such as gasoline station, hospital, and any other offices. SMP Negeri 3 Sukoharjo is one of favorite schools in Sukoharjo. This school is designed as International Standard School which is fully equipped facilities. The writer used Action research because he wanted to know whether or not and to what extent Google Docs can improve students' writing skill. Action research consists of five fundamental steps. Those steps are planning, implementing, observing, reflecting and revising. In this research, the qualitative data were collected using some techniques, namely: interview, observation, and questionnaire. The quantitative data of the research were collected by tests: pretest and post test. To know the instrument used in pre-test and post-test is valid and

reliable, the researcher tried out the test. After the data have been collected, they have to be analyzed. In this research there are two types of data that were analyzed, namely quantitative data and qualitative data. Related to the technique of analysis data in action research, Burns (1999: 156-160) proposes 5 steps in analyzing qualitative data. The process of analysis data are: assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building the data, reporting the outcomes.

DISCUSSION

This section presents the discussion of the research findings from the first cycle to the second cycle. Those findings were discussed by justifying the other theories. In more detail, each of the findings is presented as follows.

1. Google Docs improves students' writing skill of Descriptive text

The implementation of Google Docs as teaching media had improved students' writing skill of descriptive text. Five aspects in writing concerned in this research could be improved. Those are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. In the post test 2, the students got higher achievement. Each of the improvement is discussed as research findings as follows.

a. The improvement of students' writing skill in content aspect

Based on the students' scores from all tests, the content aspect had improved. It was shown by the ability students in developing the idea. Their idea was relevant with the title. The students' writing was understandable, showed knowledge of subject. The students were able explore the idea easily. There was good elaboration in their writing. By using Google Docs, students were able to develop the idea easily. They could discuss the topic being developed with other students in online way. Walsh (2010) states that Google Docs allows more than one person to work on a particular document at the same time. While Susan (2012) states that Google docs has "research tool". The most impressive Google Docs writing support is an integrated research tool that's available right on the page. A basic search yields results relevant to the document and displays a variety of types of information beyond text. Useful content-specific buttons allow users to insert links, images, maps, and citations into a document with the click of a button. Users can narrow a search to find only

images, scholarly information and quotations. This powerful research tool provides students with convenient access to information in manageable chunks that are ready for use. By using research tool in Google Docs, students could develop the idea easily. They could find the information to develop their idea from many sources.

b. The improvement of students' writing skill in organization aspect

In this aspect, the students' writing showed the idea clearly stated, supported each paragraph and logical sequencing. Most of students were able to develop the idea using appropriate generic structure of descriptive text. Google Docs helped students to make their writing well organized. In Google Docs, the researcher gave three boxes consisting title, identification, and description. Students had to fill the boxes with cohesive and coherent sentences. So the three boxes given became a good descriptive text. The researcher also gave jumbled text to the students. This activities helped students to be able to rearrange the jumbled text become coherent descriptive text.

c. The improvement of students' writing skill in vocabulary aspect

In this aspect, students were able to use appropriate word in their sentence. The meaning was clear. They mastered more vocabularies. They made fewer mistakes in spelling. By using spell checker in Google Docs, students' spelling got better before they had used spell checker.

As states by Susan (2012), A built in smart spell-checking system used by Google Docs, helps student to easily identify spelling as they type. Google's online spell-checking service is more comprehensive than a typical dictionary because the Googlebot constantly crawls the web for new and popular definitions. Since students used spell checker in Google docs, their mistakes in spelling words was reduced.

d. The improvement of students' writing skill in language use aspect

In this aspect, most of students were able to write sentence grammatically correct. They did not ignore the tense anymore. By using Google Docs, the researcher could explain about grammar

easily. The researcher showed the example of simple present tense to the students by using Google Docs. Google Docs has grammar checker to help students in solving grammar problem. As states by Susan (2012) A context-sensitive grammar checker can distinguish between words like “too” and “to” in a sentence and make appropriate suggestions for corrections. While Word uses color coding to make distinctions between spelling and grammar errors, Google sticks with one color, but the suggestion box offers smart and appropriate suggestions.

e. The improvement of students’ writing skill in mechanics aspect.

After the researcher had done the first cycle, the researcher still found many mistakes in students’ mechanics. In the cycle 2 the researcher tried to give more attention in their mechanics aspect. Actually, students had known how to use punctuation and capitalization correctly. The problem was only in their awareness in using punctuation and capitalization. They often forgot punctuation and capitalization in their writing. To solve this problem, he reminded the students about

the punctuation and the capitalization frequently to the students.

2. Google Docs improves classroom climate

The improvement of the class climate at VIII A covered the following focuses.

a. The improvement of students activeness during the lesson

The student’s activeness was shown by their attitude in the class during the lesson. Google docs enables students to give comments to each other for their works. They also developed their idea actively in Google Docs. As states by Susan (2012), she states that document sharing and comments in Google Docs provide students with opportunities to receive immediate feedback in the classroom. Since Docs are stored online, students can work at school and at home from any computer with an Internet connection and they are more likely to revisit their work if they know someone else will be commenting on it. To insert a comment, just highlight some text in the body of the document and the comment will appear on the right side of the page. Click on any comment and watch the highlighted text in the

document change color to quickly pinpoint the suggested revision. The student's activeness in writing class also supported by Parker & Chao in Inablau (2007: 48), they state that the use of collaborative technology in an educational context enhances active participation through content creation, increases students' engagement with course content, and enriches the learning process

b. The improvement of student's enthusiasm and interest during the lesson.

When Google Docs was implemented in teaching and learning process, the students were enthusiast and motivated. They had big motivation to join the lesson. They were enthusiast in doing all activities related to writing class. The students listened carefully to the researcher's instruction related with the activities in writing class using Google Docs. The implementation of Google Docs could draw the students' motivation and interest because Google Docs was the new media for them to learn writing. They could study writing collaboratively. As stated by Catlin (2012) Google Documents is a great tool to

facilitate collaboration. Group students together into writing groups working on a single document so they can research, brainstorm, and pre-write together.

c. the improvement of students' attitude toward during the lesson

Before the research had been conducted to the lesson, the student's attitude toward to the lesson was bad. It was shown by students in doing unrelated to the lesson such as chatting to their friends, talking with their friends, and made noisy in writing class. Students also spent long time to write sentences. After they had used Google Docs as teaching media, their attitude toward to the lesson got better. The students paid attention to the teacher and gave responds to him. There was no student who makes noisy anymore during the lesson. The students also could spend shorter time to write sentences. They were able to finish the writing on time. It could be summarized that the use of Google Docs had made the efficiency learning time increase.

Besides having many advantages, Google Docs also has disadvantages points. There are some disadvantages of Google Docs: 1) it cannot be used in offline. If

students want to use Google Docs, they must have internet access. So Google Docs cannot be used in every school. It only can be used in school which has internet access; 2) Google Docs wastes many cost. Besides internet access, teacher and students also need computer or laptop in implementing Google Docs as teaching and learning media. 3) In using Google Docs as teaching media, teacher has to give more control to the students in using internet access. With internet access, it's possible for students opening the sites or link unrelated with the material, such as; social media, games, etc.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that Google Docs can improve the students' writing skill of Descriptive text. First, the use of Google Docs improved the students' writing skill of descriptive text. The mean score got improved from the pre-test to the cycle 2 test, compared to the mean score of pre-test which is 62.39, the mean score of post-test 1 increased up to 69.91. Then, the mean score of post-test 2 increased up to 77.04. Using Google Docs, the students were able to improve their skill in writing descriptive text. They could easily generate the idea and develop their writing. They also improved their

sentence structure, organized the text structure properly, chose appropriate vocabularies and used the correct capitalization and punctuation.

Besides, Google Docs can improve the classroom climate during teaching and learning process. Google Docs brought positive atmosphere to the class of VIII A. The students showed better attitude towards the writing lesson. They joined writing class with enthusiastic. There was no student coming late in writing class. The students also paid more attention to the lesson. Then, they were more active in the writing class. And they also answered teacher's question actively.

From the statements, it can be concluded that Google Docs is able to improve the students' writing skill of descriptive text and the classroom climate during the teaching and learning process. Based on the research findings, the researcher would like to give some suggestions related to the teaching of listening. For the teacher, writing for most students is considered to be a difficult subject. The students often complain that they get difficulties in writing. It deals with the way of the teachers in teaching writing. The teachers should create the interesting situation in teaching learning process. It can be done by use the suitable media in teaching learning process. That is why the teachers

should apply Google Docs in teaching writing. By using Google Docs, the student will be attracted to join writing class. Automatically the teaching and learning process can run well and the objectives can be achieved. For the Students, both teacher and students have great influence in the teaching and learning process. Whatever the media and whoever the teacher if there is no participation inside the class, there will no improvement in students' skill. The students must be active in teaching learning process. Students should motivate themselves to learn English. They should follow all the activities in teaching and learning process in groups or individually. Students must keep their attitude in writing class. They should not disturb other friends. For SMPN 3 Sukoharjo, it is necessary to optimize any facilities and media to support the teaching and learning process. The complete facilities and media will help the students and teachers in improving the language skill especially for writing. For Other Researcher This study discusses the use of Google Docs as a teaching media to improve students' writing skill of descriptive text in Junior High School. It is expected for the other researcher that the result of this study can be used as a starting point for further research conducted in the future in order to create a better teaching learning process.

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